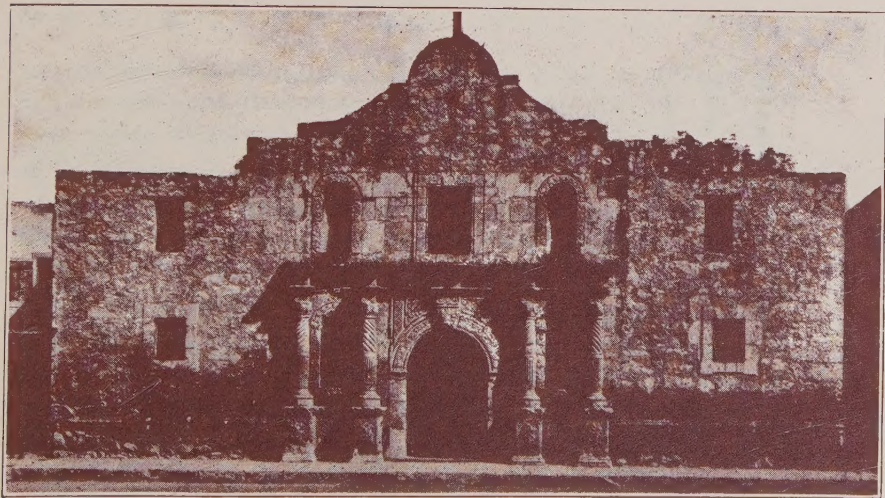


The Story of the Alamo

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By J. C. Butterfield

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The Alamo Today

T H E S T O R Y O F T H E A L A M O

FOR a visitor to come to San Antonio and fail to see the Alamo would be worse than visiting Boston and overlooking Bunker Hill—a thing which Bostonians would never permit, by the way. The great Southwest, from Louisiana to California, is dotted with missions of more pretensions, of which their present possessors are intensely proud and jealous—but nobody thinks of the Alamo as a mission. It is a monument. The story of the Alamo is a story of eleven days—of one crowning deed. All that goes before or that follows after, is merely incidental.

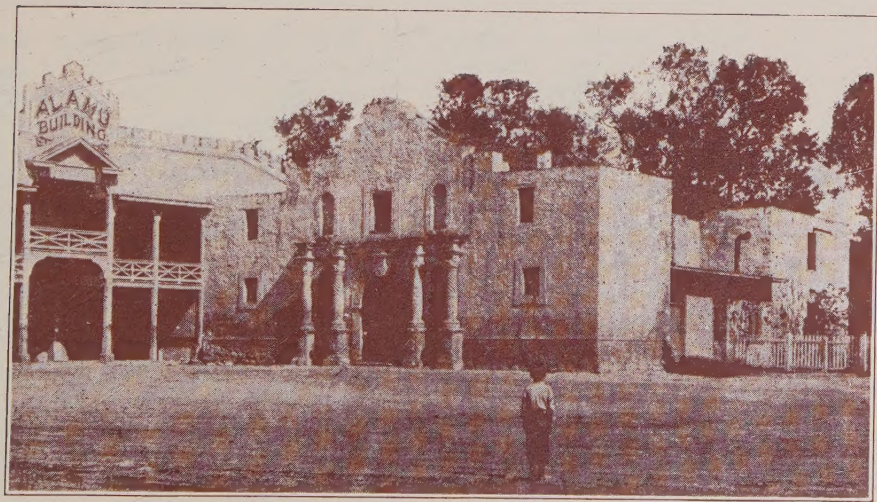
You, who are fond of sighing for the good old days of yore; who declaim on the courage and heroism of the ancients; remember that "Thermopylae had her messenger of defeat—the Alamo had none!" You, who bemoan the passing of the

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age of swashbucklers and of chivalry, reflect that less than eighty years ago the supreme test of chivalry was met by men apparently the least chivalrous because the least spectacular—**Americans**. For, in the Alamo, one hundred and eighty men—**Americans**—deliberately shut themselves to die that others might be saved. They disobeyed positive orders, and interposed themselves as a stumbling block to the advance of five thousand Mexicans in order that the women and children—their own and strangers'—might be hurried to safety, and their comrades have time to prepare to meet the foe. For eleven precious days they held the mighty Santa Anna and his hordes at bay—days that meant the difference between surprise and readiness—and then died in the consciousness of a duty well done. For, each of the one hundred and eighty accounted for at least three of the Mexicans. But let Sidney Lanier tell the story of the Alamo in a more worthy manner than I could hope to do:

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“The poor citizens of San Antonio de Bejar do not enjoy the blessings of life in quiet; those wild soldiers who have stormed the town cannot remain long without excitement. Presently Dr. Grant revives his old Matamoras project, and soon departs, carrying with him most of the troops that had been left in Bejar for its defense, together with the greater part of the garrison’s winter supply of clothing, ammunition and provisions, and in addition ‘pressing’ such of the property of the citizens as he needs, insomuch that Colonel Neill at that time in command of Bejar, writes to the Governor of Texas that the place is left destitute and defenceless. Soon afterward Colonel Neill is ordered to destroy the Alamo walls and other fortifications, and bring off the artillery, since no head can be seen there in the present crisis against the enemy, who is reported marching in force upon San Antonio. Having no teams Colonel Neill is unable to obey the order, and presently retires, his unpaid men having dropped off until but



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eighty remain, of whom Col. Wm. B. Travis assumes command. Colonel Travis promptly calls for more troops, but gets none as yet, for the Governor and the Council are at deadly quarrel, and the soldiers are all pressing toward Matamor^{as}. Travis has brought thirty men with him; about the middle of February he is joined by Colonel Bowie with thirty others, and these with the eighty already in the garrison, constitute the defenders of San Antonio de Bejar. On the 22nd of February appears General Santa Anna at the head of a well appointed army of some five thousand men, and marches straight on into town. The Texans retire before him slowly, and finally shut themselves up in the Alamo; here straightway begins that bloodiest, smokiest, grimest tragedy of this century. William B. Travis, James Bowie and David Crockett, with their one hundred and forty-five effective men, are enclosed within a stone rectangle one hundred and ninety feet long and one hundred and twenty-two feet wide, having



The Alamo 1854

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the old church of the Alamo in the southeast corner, in which are their quarters and magazine. They have a supply of water from the ditches which run alongside the walls, and by way of provision they have about ninety bushels of corn and thirty beef cattle, their entire stock, all collected since the enemy came in sight. The walls are unbroken, with no angles from which to command beseiging lines. They have fourteen pieces of artillery mounted, with but little ammunition.

"Santa Anna demands unconditional surrender. Travis replies with a cannon shot, and the attack commences, the enemy running up a blood-red flag in town. Travis despatches a messenger with a call to his countrymen for reinforcements, which concludes: 'Though this call may be neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible, and die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor and that of his country. Victory or death!' Meantime the enemy is active. On the 25th Travis has a sharp fight to prevent

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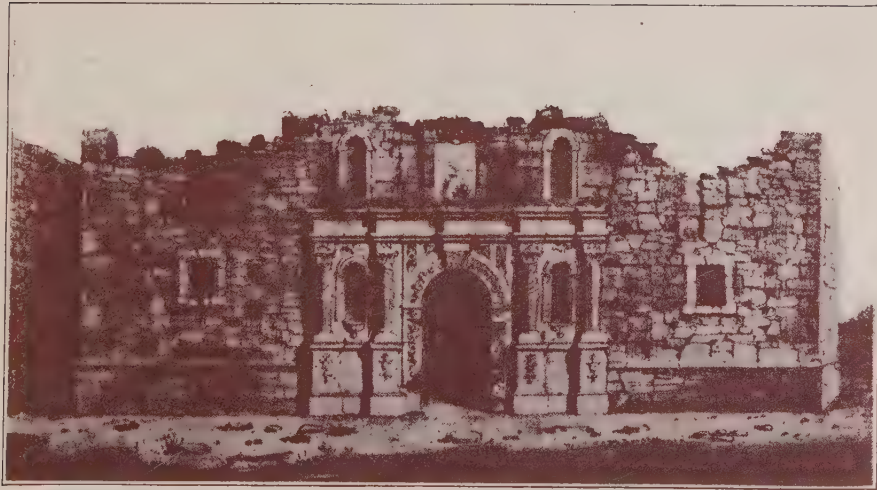
him from erecting a battery raking the gates of the Alamo. At night it is erected, with another a half mile off at the Garita, or powderhouse, on a sharp eminence, where the cemeteries are now located. On the 26th there is a skirmish with the Mexican cavalry. In the cold—for a norther has commenced to blow and the thermometer is down to thirty-nine—the Texans make a sally successfully for wood and water, and that night they burn some old houses on the northeast that might afford cover for the enemy. So amid the enemy's constant rain of shells and balls, which miraculously hurt no one, the Texans strengthen their works and the siege goes on. On the 28th Fannin starts from Goliad with three hundred troops and four pieces of artillery, but for lack of teams and provisions quickly returns, and the little garrison is left to its fate. On the morning of the first of March there is doubtless a wild shout of welcome in the Alamo; Captain John W. Smith has managed to convey thirty-two men from

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Gonzales into the fort. These join the heroes, and the attack and defense go on. On the 3rd a single man, Moses Rose, escaped from the fort. His account of that day must entitle it to consecration as one of the most pathetic days of time.

“About two hours before sunset on the 3rd of March, 1836, the bombardment suddenly ceased, and the enemy withdrew an unusual distance. * * * Colonel Travis paraded all his effective men in a single file, and taking his position in front of the centre, he stood for some moments apparently speechless from emotion; then nerving himself for the occasion, he addressed them substantially as follows:

“‘My brave companions: Stern necessity compels me to employ the few moments afforded by this probably brief cessation of conflict, in making known to you the most interesting, yet the most solemn, melancholy and unwelcome fact that humanity can realize. Our fate is sealed. Within a very few days, perhaps a very few hours, we must all be in eter-



The Alamo 1836

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nity! I have deceived you long by the promise of help; but I crave your pardon, hoping that after hearing my explanation you will not only regard my conduct as pardonable, but heartily sympathize with me in my extreme necessity. I have continually received the strongest assurances of help from home. Every letter from the Council, and every one that I have seen from individuals at home, has teemed with assurances that our people were ready, willing and anxious to come to our relief. These assurances I received as facts. In the honest and simple confidence of my heart I have transmitted to you these promises of help and my confident hope of success. But the promised help has not come, and our hopes are not to be realized. I have evidently confided too much in the promises of our friends; but let us not be in haste to censure them. Our friends were evidently not informed of our perilous condition in time to save us. Doubtless they would have been here by the time they expected any

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considerable force of the enemy. My calls on Colonel Fannin remain unanswered, and my messengers have not returned. The probabilities are that his whole command has fallen into the hands of the enemy, or been cut to pieces, and that our couriers have been cut off. (So does the brave simple soul refuse to feel any bitterness in the hour of death.) Then we must die. Our business is not to make a fruitless effort to save our lives, but to choose the manner of our death. But three modes are presented to us; let us choose that by which we may best serve our country. Shall we surrender and be deliberately shot without taking the life of a single enemy? Shall we try to cut our way through the Mexican ranks and be butchered before we can kill twenty of our adversaries? I am opposed to either method. Let us resolve to withstand our adversaries to the last, and at each advance to kill as many of them as possible. And when at last they shall storm our fortress, let us kill them as they come! kill them as

The Alamo as it stands today. The modest chapel overshadowed by the unsightly ruin built on part of the foundations of the old convent. It is about these walls that the controversy between factions of the Daughters of the Republic and the Governor has arisen. One faction, aided by the Governor, wishes to "restore" the convent, to its supposed condition at the time of the Fall. The other faction wishes to preserve and beautify that which is left.





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they scale our wall! kill them as they leap within! Kill them as they raise their weapons and as they use them! kill them, as they kill our companions! and continue to kill them as long as one of us shall remain alive! But I leave every man to his own choice. Should any man prefer to surrender—or to attempt an escape—he is at liberty to do so. My own choice is to stay in the fort and die for my country, fighting as long as breath shall remain in my body. This will I do even if you leave me alone. Do as you think best; but no man can die with me without affording me comfort in the hour of death!

“Colonel Travis then drew his sword and with its point traced a line upon the ground extending from the right to the left of the file. Then resuming his position in front of the center, he said, ‘I now want every man who is determined to stay here and die with me to come across this line. Who will be the first? March!’ The first respondent was Tapley

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Holland, who leaped the line at a bound, exclaiming, 'I am ready to die for my country!' His example was instantly followed by every man in the file with the exception of Rose. Every sick man that could walk, arose from his bunk and tottered across the line. Colonel Bowie, who could not leave his bed, said, 'Boys, I am not able to come to you; but I wish some of you would be so kind as to remove my cot over there.' Four men instantly ran to the cot, and each lifting a corner, carried it across the line. Then every sick man that could not walk made the same request, and had his bunk removed in the same way.

"Rose, too, was deeply affected, but differently from his companions. He stood still till every man but himself had crossed the line. He sank upon the ground, covered his face and yielded to his own reflections. A bright idea came to his relief; he spoke the Mexican dialect very fluently, and could he once get safely out of the fort, he might easily pass for

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a Mexican and effect an escape. He directed a searching glance at the cot of Colonel Bowie. Colonel David Crockett was leaning over the cot, conversing with its occupant in an undertone. After a few seconds Bowie looked at Rose and said, 'You seem not to be willing to die with us, Rose?' 'No,' said Rose, 'I am not prepared to die and shall not do so if I can avoid it.' Then Crockett also looked at him, and said, 'You may as well conclude to die with us, old man, for escape is impossible.' Rose made no reply, but looked at the top of the wall. 'I have often done worse than climb that wall,' thought he. Suiting the action to the thought, he sprang up, seized his wallet of unwashed clothes, and ascended the wall. Standing on its top, he looked down within to take a last view of his dying friends. They were all now in motion, but what they were doing he heeded not; overpowered by his feelings, he looked away and saw them no more. He threw down his wallet and leaped after it. He took the road which led

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down the river around a bend to a ford, and through the town by the church. He waded the river at the ford and passed through the town. He saw no person, but the doors were all closed and San Antonio appeared a deserted city.

“After passing through the town he turned down the river. When he had gone about a quarter of a mile below the town his ears were saluted by the thunder of the bombardment which was renewed. That thunder continued to remind him that his friends were true to their cause, by a continual roar with but slight intervals until a little before sunrise on the morning of the 6th, when it ceased and he heard it no more.

“And well may it ‘cease’ on that morning of the 6th; for after that thrilling 3rd, the seige goes on, the enemy furious, the Texans replying calmly and slowly. Finally, Santa Anna determines to storm. Some hours before daylight on the morning of the 6th, the Mexican infantry, provided with scaling ladders, and backed by the cavalry to keep them up

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to the work, surrounded the doomed fort. At daylight they advance and plant their ladders, but give back under a deadly fire from the Texans. They advance again, and again retreat. A third time—Santa Anna threatening and coaxing by turns—they plant their ladders. Now they mount the walls. The Texans are overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers and exhaustion of continued watching and fighting. The Mexicans swarm into the fort. The Texans club their guns; one by one they fall fighting—now Travis yonder by the western wall, now Crockett here in the angle of the church wall, now Bowie butchered and mutilated in his sick cot, breathes quick and passes away; and presently every Texan lies dead, while there in horrid heaps are stretched five hundred and twenty-one dead Mexicans, and as many more wounded! Of the human beings that were in the fort five remain alive: Mrs. Dickinson and her child, Colonel Travis' Negro servant, and two Mexican women."

SUCH IS THE STORY OF THE ALAMO!

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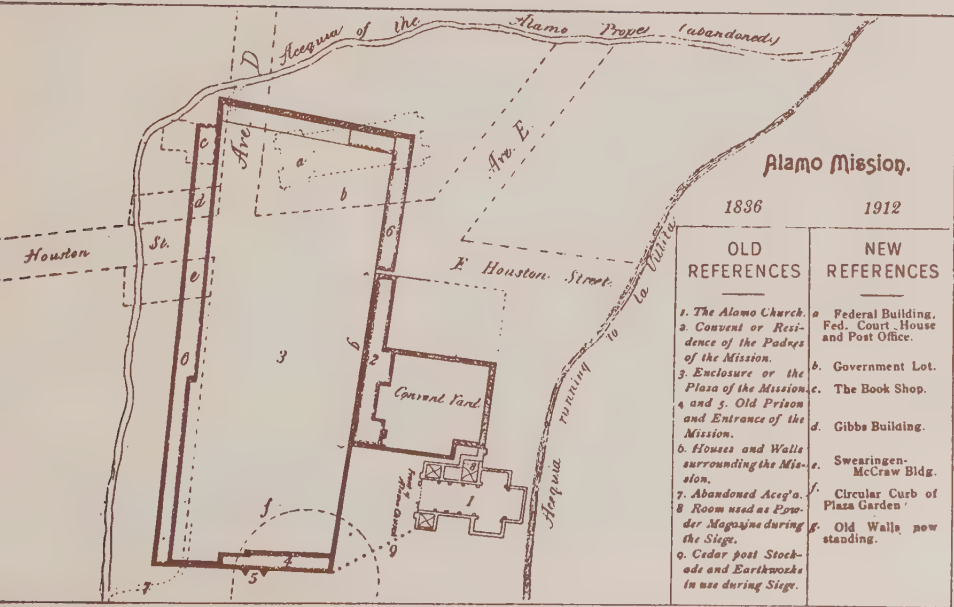
What is now known as "The Alamo" is in reality the chapel of the Mission of San Antonio de Valero. The original mission was founded on the Rio Grande in 1700 under another name. After several changes, both in name and location, it was finally settled in its present location in 1718. Then it was three-quarters of a mile from the presidio of San Antonio de Bejar; now it is on the east side of Alamo Plaza, the heart of the City of San Antonio.

The missions of Texas ceased to be used for religious purposes in 1794, and San Antonio de Valero gradually came to be known as "The Alamo," some say because it was the headquarters of a body of Mexican soldiers known as "the Company of the Alamos of Parras." Another story is to the effect that it was so called because it was built in a grove of cottonwoods, Alamo being the Spanish for cottonwood. I like to believe the latter story, because as late as fifteen years ago there were half a dozen magnificent specimens of those

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trees growing along the ditch which flowed behind the church walls. The closing of the ditch resulted in the death of all but one of the trees.

Like all other missions, San Antonio de Valero was built as much for purposes of defense as religion, and the chapel was the smallest part of it. All traces of the original walls have long since disappeared, but the appended sketch shows the size and location with reference to present day landmarks. That portion marked "Convent Yard," is today covered by the unsightly ruin which completely overshadows the modest chapel, and causes so much unfavorable comment. This is the property which, through an appeal to the people to "Save the Alamo!" and the generosity of Mrs. Clara Driscoll-Sevier, was purchased a few years ago by the State of Texas (the chapel was purchased in 1883) and given into the custody of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. An unfortunate controversy which disrupted the Daughters, and the well-



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meaning—though illegal—efforts of Governor Colquitt to settle the matter by personally assuming the responsibility of “restoring” the Alamo, form a page which all patriotic Texans would like to see torn from its history.

And it is all so entirely useless. To ninety-nine per cent of the people the church is “The Alamo” and always will be. A glance at its interior will show that, while the metal roof is a late innovation, the walls must be those that were standing at the time of the Fall. Even the beginnings of the arches which supported the original roof of masonry are plainly discernable. Some of its stones were undoubtedly consecrated by the blood of its heroic defenders, while the present convent walls seem to have been built on part of the old foundations at a later date. That the Alamo was destroyed by the Mexicans after the Fall, there is no doubt. Dr. Barnard, one of the survivors of Fannin’s Massacre at

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Goliad, who was a prisoner in San Antonio, in his diary under date of May 19th, 1836, writes:

“General Andrade has received orders to destroy the Alamo and proceed to join the main army at Goliad. The troops have hitherto been busy in fortifying the Alamo. They are now as busy as bees—soldiers, convicts and all—in tearing down the walls, etc.”

There should be no room for controversy. The whole of Alamo Plaza is ground hallowed by the blood of martyrs, and far from being desecrated by its conversion to commercialism, it is more appreciated now—a beautiful breathing spot in the heart of a congested city—than it would be if covered by modern imitations of buildings long since destroyed. The preservation of “The Alamo” is a matter of vital interest, not only to Texans, but to all Americans—to all the world that honors a hero—for the heroes of the Alamo

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were Texans by adoption, gathered from practically every part of the United States; from England, Scotland, Ireland—from every country that breeds **men**. But nothing remains of The Alamo excepting the church, which, with its quaint, simple lines, ought to stand out boldly, the most fitting monument to those men who made its history that could ever be devised.

THE STORY OF THE ALAMO

List of the Heroes Who Perished in The Alamo

W. B. Travis	— Butler	A. M. Dickinson
James Bowie	J. Baker	C. Despalier
David Crockett	— Burns	L. Davell
J. B. Bonham	— Bailey	J. C. Day
M. Autry	J. Beard	J. Dickens
R. Allen	— Bailess	— Devault
M. Address	— Bourn	W. Dearduff
— Ayres	R. Cunningham	I. Ewing
— Anderson	J. Clark	T. R. Evans
W. Blazeby	J. Cane	D. Floyd
J. B. Bowman	— Cloud	J. Flanders
— Baker	S. Crawford	W. Fishbaugh
S. C. Blair	— Carey	— Forsyth
— Blair	W. Cummings	G. Fuga
— Brown	R. Crossan	J. C. Goodrich
— Bowin	— Cockran	J. George
— Balbentine	G. W. Cottle	J. Gaston
J. J. Baugh	J. Dust	J. C. Garrett
— Burnell	J. Dillard	C. Grimes

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— Gwyn
 J. E. Garwin
 — Gilmore
 — Hutchason
 S. Holloway
 — Harrison
 — Heiskell
 J. Hayes
 — Horrell
 — Harris
 — Hawkins
 J. Holland
 W. Hersie
 — Ingram
 — John
 J. Jones
 L. Johnson
 C. B. Jamison
 W. Johnson
 T. Jackson
 D. Jackson

— Jackson
 G. Kemble
 A. Kent
 W. King
 — Kenney
 J. Kenney
 — Lewis
 — Lewis
 W. Linn
 Wm. Lightfoot
 J. Lonly
 — Lanio
 W. Lightfoot
 G. W. Linn
 W. Mills
 — Micheson
 E. T. Mitchell
 E. Melton
 — McGregor
 T. Miller
 J. McCoy

E. Morton
 R. Mussulman
 — Milsop
 R. B. Moore
 W. Marshall
 — Moore
 R. McKenney
 — McCaferty
 J. McGee
 G. W. Main
 M. Querry
 G. Nelson
 — Nelson
 J. Noland
 — Nelson
 Wm. G. Nelson
 C. Ostiner
 — Pelone
 C. Parker
 N. Pollard
 G. Paggan

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S. Robinson
—— Reddinson
N. Rough
—— Rusk
—— Robbins
W. Smith
—— Sears
C. Smith
—— Stockton
—— Stewart
A. Smith
J. C. Smith
—— Sewall
A. Smith
—— Simpson
R. Star
—— Starn
N. Sutherland

W. Summers
J. Summerline
—— Thompson
—— Tomlinson
E. Taylor
G. Taylor
J. Taylor
W. Taylor
—— Thornton
—— Thomas
J. M. Thurston
—— Valentine
L. J. Wilson
—— Williamson
D. Walsh
—— Washington
D. Wilson
W. Wells

C. Wright
R. White
T. Walters
J. White
J. Wilson
—— Warner
J. Washington
—— Warnall
D. Wilson
A. Wolf
Mexicans
—— Badilla
Gregoria Esparza
Andres Nava
Juan Abamello
Antonio Fuentes
Toribio Losoya
Jose Ma Guerrero



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